

Representative Jeff Morris • 40th District

• Governor Gregoire calls for public hearings on gas prices

In response to public concern on high gas prices, legislators convened several public hearings. The Technology, Energy and Communications Committee was the only committee involved in all four areas: consumer protection on price gouging, fuel price impacts on agricultural communities, alternative fuels and emergency preparedness. At these hearings, we heard farmers testify about decreasing margins as fuel costs continue to increase and consumer advocacy groups express concern about price gouging at the pumps.

To help farmers in my district and in Eastern Washington, I am working to open up value-added industries such as ethanol and biodiesel that will help increase gross revenues for farmers. I will also support legislation to remove the sales tax from off-road diesel for agricultural use in response to rising energy costs.

From a consumer standpoint, I am concerned about potential gas price gouging that occurred after hurricane Katrina. Despite being seventh in the nation for petroleum refining and having four local refineries, drivers in our region have seen dramatic increases in fuel costs this year. I will work with the Attorney General's office to monitor price gouging and Governor Gregoire on legislation to promote alternative fuels.



A special word on emergency preparedness

Since the tragic 9/11 terrorist attacks, I have worked hard to keep the Legislature's focus on protecting our state's critical infrastructure.

As a result of those continuing efforts, our state and region have become national models of critical infrastructure protection. As president of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, an organization representing the economic interests of five states and two Canadian provinces, I led North America's first ever bi-national emergency desktop exercise to simulate a potential terrorist attack and response in our region.

From that event we developed a list of 21 immediate issues that need to be addressed. To date, the federal government has addressed just one. Since then, additional exercises have taken place. A list of these important issues can be viewed at www.pnwer.org.

I will continue to fight for emergency preparedness, anti-terrorism, and security measures that make sense to help keep our region, our people, and our economy flourishing.



Representative Jeff Morris Report to the 40th District



Rep. Jeff Morris

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Dear neighbors,

As you know, the cost of gasoline is making headlines daily. Families, farmers and businesses are finding it difficult to manage rising fuel costs. Unfortunately, it is difficult for anyone to escape supply and demand factors that affect gas prices. Instability overseas, rising demand in Asia and natural disasters contribute to what we pay for energy. On the other hand, the oil companies have just posted record profits for last quarter. Governor Gregoire has asked me to chair hearings to investigate pricing and protect our state's consumers, businesses and economy from any potential profit gouging.

What we can do right now to provide relief for families and businesses is to focus on energy independence. As chair of the House Technology, Energy and Communications Committee, my service in the Legislature has been about moving Washington State in a new direction that reduces our reliance on foreign oil and promotes the use of alternative fuels and new energy technologies. This is the only way we can get long-term relief at the fuel pump or electric meter.

When issues like rising energy prices become hot, typically a rush of reactionary political activity occurs. Your support over the years has allowed me to work on issues that have put Washington State at the forefront of innovative policies that will increase our energy independence. I will continue to focus on expanding our technology, energy and communications sectors to create even more economic growth.

I hope you will find this newsletter on our state's energy initiatives helpful and informative. Please contact me at my district office or via e-mail with your questions and comments.

Regards,

Jeff Morris



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Policies that promote energy independence are key to sustaining economic development, which stabilizes prices for consumers and protects our environment.

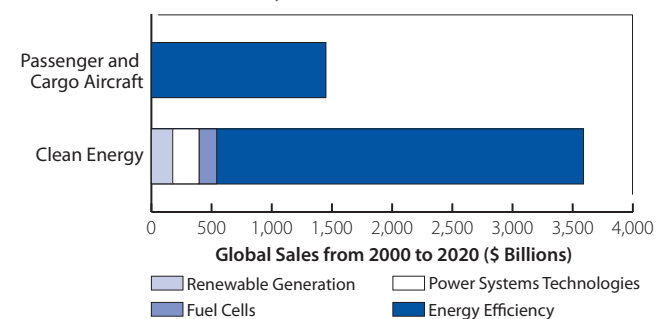
An energy leader

- One of the first biofuel packages in the nation to promote the development of a biofuel industry.
- "Best in the Nation" net metering law that creates a standard for you to get compensated for generating renewable electricity at your home.
- Sales and tax breaks for constructing winds farms, solar installations and bio-mass facilities.
- Tax breaks for manufacturing solar cells in Washington State.
- Incentives for purchasing hybrid vehicles.
- Encouraged electric utilities to adopt standards that make it easier for consumers who generate some of their own electricity to connect to the power-grid.
- Allowed the state to permit wind farms and other renewable energy projects to expedite permitting process.
- Created a first in the nation pre-identified wind farm mitigation area where wind farm developers can mitigate any environmental disturbance caused by farm construction or operation.
- First state to adopt, in statute, energy generation CO2 mitigation laws that account for life cycle costs of energy.
- One of the first states to promote fuel cell use through tax incentives and state procurement.
- One of the first 10 states to adopt energy efficiency laws on 10 appliances for in-state use that could conserve some 900 million kilowatt-hours of electricity by 2020, enough to power over 90,000 homes.

• Creating Jobs

Washington State is rapidly developing a thriving renewable energy industry. Reports indicate that three times the jobs will be created in this sector than aerospace between now and 2020. I received a lot of attention for leading the legislative effort to keep Boeing manufacturing in Washington State. I continue to focus on creating aerospace jobs, as well as expanding our technology, communications and energy sectors to create even more economic growth.

Relative Size of Clean Energy Industry
(Sources: Rolls Royce, IEA, ADL, ONL, EREN, EU ATLAS)



• Homegrown Biofuels

Through the leadership of the committee I chair, Washington is at the forefront of the national biofuel movement. Three years ago, we passed a landmark package that other states are now emulating. And just this month a large refinery for biodiesel was announced in Longview because of our incentives.

Biofuels like biodiesel and ethanol can be made from agricultural crops such as oil seed or wheat. Thus, farmers in our state will benefit from a new market for their crops to produce biofuels.

Demand is already strong for diesel, with current annual sales in Washington amounting to 1 billion gallons a year. The state government alone consumes some 35 million gallons of diesel a year. Biodiesel only accounts for 1.5 million gallons.

To help increase the supply of homegrown biofuels, the Legislature is considering jumpstarting the market by funding a seed crusher and securing a strategic biofuel reserve to get us through tough energy times.

Biofuel is just one way we are looking to foster economic opportunities that will help to create both profits and energy independence for our state. I'll keep you updated on progress in this area this session.

• Clean Cars

In 2009, Washington will join California in requiring stricter car emissions standards. As other states adopt these rules, car manufacturers will have a greater incentive to produce fuel efficient cars that emit less greenhouse gases and harmful pollutants. Consumers will benefit from better gas mileage, lower fuel costs and improved air quality.

• Energy Challenges

Making law in the energy arena is a challenge to say the least. Legislative bodies are very good at being reactive. Either to emergencies or to special interest groups. They are not very good at being proactive.

Because of your willingness to let me work on issues that are proactive and too complicated to generate news headlines, we have made significant progress in energy policy. This last session was a great example of that. Of the roadblocks to putting new energy technologies on the ground, one of the most critical and complex challenges is the lack of a common interconnection standard.

Interconnection is how you hook up or wire small wind, solar, fuel cells or micro turbines that generate hot water and electricity to the electricity grid. Washington has a unique challenge in that we have 63 utilities: 3 private utilities and 60 public utilities (government-run or cooperatives). In the case of the government-run utilities, only the Legislature has clear jurisdiction to establish broad state-wide rules.

What does this mean for you? Today in California, you can walk out of Costco with solar panels for your home that generate electricity for your personal use. Any excess capacity is sold back to an electric utility when you generate more than you use. It is available there because how you hook it up at your home to the utility is the same procedure across the state. In Washington, that same solar panel, if sold at Costco, could have 63 different procedures to hook it up!

A recent bill – very popular with solar enthusiasts – sought to award some tax incentives to people who would like to install solar panels. Everyone in the state does not have the utilities we have here in our community. Can you imagine walking out of Costco with a solar panel and then having to argue with your small local public utility district (which does not want your electricity on their system) about how to wire up your unit?

It wouldn't happen. After quite a tussle and many late-night engineering meetings, I was able to get a path for a standard interconnection into the solar energy bill that would open up interconnection to all distributive generation energy technologies (wind, solar, fuel cells, micro-turbines).

Our brightest energy future is a holistic one that will be best served by the flexibility to use the technology of your choosing.

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